

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SEOUL 06547 251129Z

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DHA-02 L-03 SS-15 SP-02 INR-07 SCA-01

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R 250922Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2336

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR KS

SUBJECT: ROKG LETTER TO MAJOR U.S. CHURCH GROUPS

REF: STATE 196629

1. SHORTLY PRIOR TO ARRIVAL REFTEL, EMBOFF WAS INFORMED BY AMERICAN MISSIONARY HERE THAT MCUI HAD SENT LETTER TO VARIOUS DENOMINATIONS IN U.S. EXPRESSING CONCERN ABOUT CERTAIN MISSIONARIES WHO WERE ENGAGED IN SUBVERSIVE ACTIVITIES IN THE ROK.

2. BACKGROUND TO MCUI LETTER IS AS FOLLOWS: IN MARCH, FOUR PROTESTANT MISSIONARIES WHO WERE CONCERNED ABOUT POLITICAL ACTIVITIES OF SOME OF THEIR COLLEAGUES DISTRIBUTED CIRCULAR LETTER WITHIN MISSIONARY COMMUNITY DISAVOWING ALL POLITICAL ACTIVITY AND RECOMMENDING THAT LETTER EXPRESSING THIS SENTIMENT BE SENT TO VARIOUS ROK MINISTRIES. SUGGESTED LETTER TO MINISTRIES ENCLOSED WITH CIRCULAR EXPRESSED GRATITUDE FOR FREEDOM LAW PROVIDES CONDUCT MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN KOREA; IT ALSO STATED THAT PRIMARY PURPOSE OF MISSIONARIES IS TO BRING INDIVIDUAL TO KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST AND REMAIN STRICTLY NEUTRAL CONCERNING POLITICAL AFFAIRS. RIPOSTING TO LETTER FROM NON-POLRTICAL
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MISSIONARY WING, GROUP QF CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT

MISSIONARIES KNOWN AS "MONDAY NIGHT GROUP" CIRCULATED THEIR OWN STATEMENT OF POSITION TO MISSIONARY COMMUNITY. FIVE PAGE STATEMENT, WHICH WAS SIGNED BY 23 MISSIONARIES, DETAILS BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL REASONS FOR POLITICAL ACTIVISM AGAINST PARK REGIME. UPSHOT IS THAT THERE IS NO ZONE OF HUMAN EXPERIENCE WHICH IS OF NONCONCERN TO THE CHRISTIAN. STATEMENT INVITES CONTINUING DIALOGUE ON THE SUBJECT.

3. BOTH LETTERS WERE MEANT FOR CIRCULATION WITHIN THE MISSIONARY COMMUNITY AND NOT FOR GENERAL DISSEMINATION. HOWEVER, LETTERS OF THIS KIND INEVITABLY FIND THEIR WAY INTO THE HANDS OF THE GOVERNMENT AND SINCE THEY WERE SIGNED NAMES OF MISSIONARIES WERE KNOWN FOR INCLUSION IN MCUI LETTER. MISSIONARIES NAMED IN PARA 3 REFTEL WERE LISTED AMONG 23 WHO SIGNED LETTER JUSTIFYING POLITICAL ACTIVISM.

4. THUS FAR, WE HAVE NOT HEARD THAT MISSIONARIES NAMED HAVE HAD DIFFICULTY RENEWING VISAS. HOWEVER, MANY MISSIONARIES ARE NOW WORKING ON THREE MONTH VISAS AND REFUSAL TO RENEW COULD COME SWIFTLY. WE WILL MAKE DISCREET CHECKS ABOUT THIS.

5. COPIES OF THE CORRESPONDENCE, PARTICULARLY MCUI LETTER WILL BE APPRECIATED. COPIES OF MISSIONARY LETTERS ARE BEING AIRPOUCHED TO THE DEPARTMENT.
SNEIDER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS, RELIGIOUS GROUPS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 AUG 1975
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975SEOUL06547
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750293-0467
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750821/aaaaasax.tel
Line Count: 88
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: 75 STATE 196629
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 16 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <16 JUL 2003 by CunninFX>; APPROVED <17 JUL 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ROKG LETTER TO MAJOR U.S. CHURCH GROUPS
TAGS: PFOR, KS, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006